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Organization and History of the Alberta Committee of Action Groups of the Disabled.

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INTRODUCTION

Committee of Action Groups of the Disabled had its beginnings six years ago and has increased its role primarily through the volunteer effort of many physically disabled individuals. Its popularity with the disabled community may be an indication that this form of intervention meets some of the profound needs of Alberta's disabled.

The Alberta Committee was the first group in Canada adopting the philosophy of groups of disabled people working towards improving the lifestyles of disabled people. For a number of years, it was the only organization in Canada intervening on behalf of disabled people; both in terms of the number of dedicated physically disabled volunteers and by the extent to which their work has been thought out and clear concepts formed. The Committee is one of the leaders in self advocacy.

During the past few months, the Alberta Committee has been going through a period of self-examination and soul searching in a desire to improve its potential and gain control of its destiny. The Alberta Committee of Action Groups of the Disabled arose in 1973 as a grass-roots effort on the part of the disabled to acquire new rights and entitlements. The Committee recognized that the lifestyles of disabled Albertans needed improvement and that disabled Albertans were capable of identifying necessary changes.

In order to facilitate positive legislative and policy change, the Alberta Committee aproached the provincial government on forming a committee involving M.L.A.'s and disabled Albertans. As Premier Lougheed stated on February 12, 1979:

> "In particular the MLA/Handicapped Joint Committee has provided a forum for the exhange of ideas as well as an important communication link between the disabled and the legislators. That Committee was formed as a direct result of a luncheon held in November 1972, sponsored by the Edmonton Action Group of the Disabled and attended by forty members of the Legislative Assembly.

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta - Alberta Legislature Library

Subsequent to that luncheon the Alberta Committee of Action Groups of the Disabled was formed, representing handicapped action groups from all parts of the province. The impetus provided through the support and encouragement of such groups has been invaluable."

The emergance of the MLA/Handicapped Joint Committee, with the involvement by the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Advanced Education and Manpower, the Leader of the Opposition, Minister of Social Services and Community Health, and the MLA for Spirit River, and five disabled representatives from across the province, resulted in a number of beneficial changes at the provincial and local levels.

The results obtained directly or indirectly by the MLA/Handicapped Joint Committee include:

1) accessibility standards in the Alberta Building Regulations.
2) establishment of the Home Adaptation Program.
3) amendments to the provincial Election Act to provide for at home voting for disabled citizens.
4) initiating the Aids to Daily Living Program.

Generally speaking, major improvements at the provincial level have been made as a result of the established communication link, the MLA/Handicapped Joint Committee.

The most important results, in our view, stems from the creation of local action groups. Until 1979 - 80 fiscal year, the local groups, functioning primarily on a volunteer basis, have made numerous changes in their municipalities. These changes include:

1) establishing alternative transportation.
2) assisting civic officals on accessibility standards.
3) instituting curb ramping programs.
4) surveying existing buildings for access and recommending changes.
5) increasing awareness of the disabled in the community.
6) developing leadership and self-confidence in disabled people.
7) creating an awareness by disabled people of services available to him and how to get the service.

During this fiscal year, through a federally sponsored program of the Canadian Employment Commission and Secretary of State, the Alberta Committee

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has been able to place staff persons in the local areas to act as advisors, a training resource, assist in identifying areas of concern and provide communication with the local members. With the added benefit of having persons available to them the local groups have expanded their role of improving their own and other disabled peoples lifestyles. (Appendix A)

ALBERTA COMMITTEE PROPOSED STRUCTURE CHANGE

In 1977, through the joint efforts of ARCD and the Alberta Committee three recommendations were made to the provincial government to improve existing disability policy. The one recommendation implemented was the formation of the interdepartmental committee. To date no similar committee exists within the volunteer sector.

The need to strengthen the roles of service providers to disabled people and consumer groups primarily involving disabled people is obvious. The need to identify gaps in service and the needs of physically disabled Albertans is also obvious. However, service providing agencies cannot realistically evaluate their own gaps in service nor should they have to. That is part of the role of consumer group, to evaluate the level of service by groups and government.

History has shown that it is the consumer that initially identifies gaps in service. Research on the Life-Styles of the Physically Disabled done by the Edmonton Action Group of the Disabled research team in 1972 pointed out a number of gaps in service. (Appendix B) Some of their recommendations have been inplemented, some have gone through greater research, and some have been ignored. When gaps in service are established and they remain unfulfilled it is the consumer, out of frustration, that initiates the service. This reaction can be seen in the transportation services offered in Red Deer and Grande Prairie. In areas such as housing and employment the disabled themselves have begun finding alternatives. The greatest difficulty comes when consumers, who can ill afford to start up such operations, do so. There are limited financial resources available.

In Alberta there are a number of potentially excellent programs by by the government that will assist disabled people. The most recent programs, the Aids to Daily Living Program and the Alberta Assured Income for the Severely Disabled have the ability to reduce a number of disadvantages encounted by many disabled Albertans. These programs unfortunately did not include physically disabled in the planning. It appears no consideration has been given to assuring at least one disabled person

who would be using the Aids to Daily Living Program would sit on the planned Advisory Committee to recommend changes to the program. Without input from users that committee will not accurately reflect the needs of the people using the program. There is a similar problem with the Alberta Assured Income Program for the Severely Disabled. The Medical/Social Review Board does not recognize the need for representation from the physically disabled although the need for input by mental health is recognized.

Two complementary approaches must be developed to assure a cooperative approach to government and provide maximum involvement of individuals concerned with physically disabled persons. The following is a suggested framework to assure a cooperative approach at the volunteer level and a coordinated approach at the government level.

The framework has many advantages such as:

- providing a source of involved individuals to input into government on such programs as Aids to Daily Living and Alberta Assured Income for the Severely Disabled.
- working out a more effective and productive vehicle for cooperation collaboration between groups and agencies.
- using the resources of other groups more effectively.
- more involvement at the grass roots level.
- cooperation in identifying the consumer needs and establishing joint priorities.
- additional development of community resources and referral.

FLOWCHART

The flowchart takes into account the difficulties in promoting communication and cooperation between service providing agencies and groups of the disabled. The proposed model will permit taking advantage of the strengths of service providers and maximize consumer strengths as organizers of the disabled community.

Implications

1) The model reduces the fragmentation. The appearance of a single body structure could erode the base of existing service providing

groups and consumer groups and diminish their capacity to advocate for their own needs and interests. The model increases cooperation and collaboration.

2) The model respects the autonomy of service providers and consumers while providing a framework in which they can be integrated. Unlike a single body approach, we propose a multi lateral and multi level communications approach. At the local and provincial level issues of mutual concern can be worked on yet leave sufficient f flexibility for both groups to work on matters that primarily co concern them.

3) The model builds on ongoing links among different disability in interests. The model assures less duplication of effort and will maintain cooperation among groups. The primary volunteer structure of Alberta Committee's local groups did not permit the creation, reinforcement and maintance of cooperation among members. The addition of staff at the local level will increase communication and identification of common issues. It will also help reduce previously reinforced separateness and competitiveness between all groups.

4) The model can be established quickly, because the Alberta Committee has established groups in the major centres of the province, the model can be implemented almost immediately. Since we cannot speak for service providing groups we are referring to the consumer portion of the flowchart.

OUR APPROACH

Our approach is to develop cooperation in the delivery of service to the disabled and is based on the experience of the employees at the local level as well as activities of the employees at the provincial level.

This approach has five main objectives:

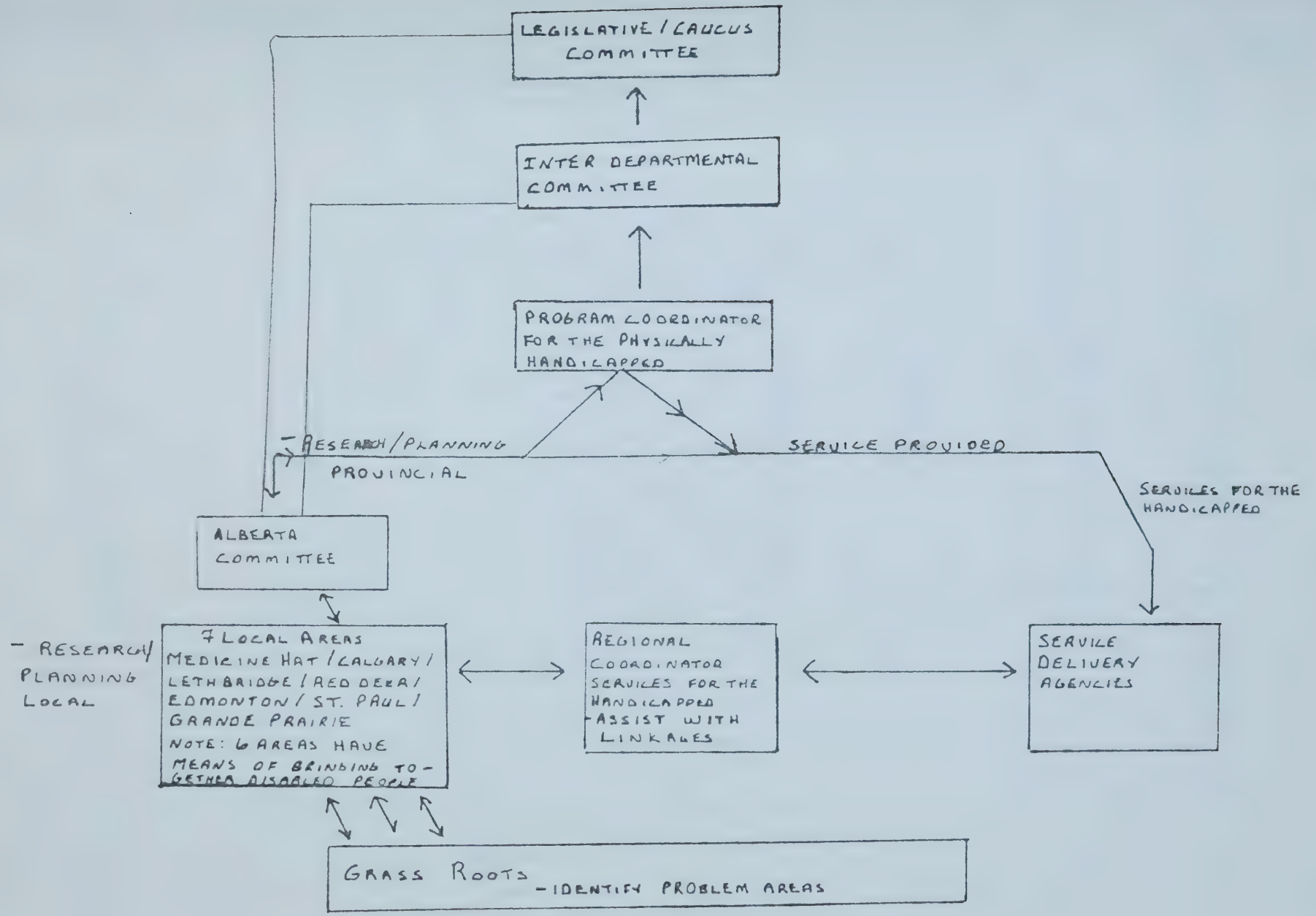
1) It has to be provincial in nature initially involving established local groups.

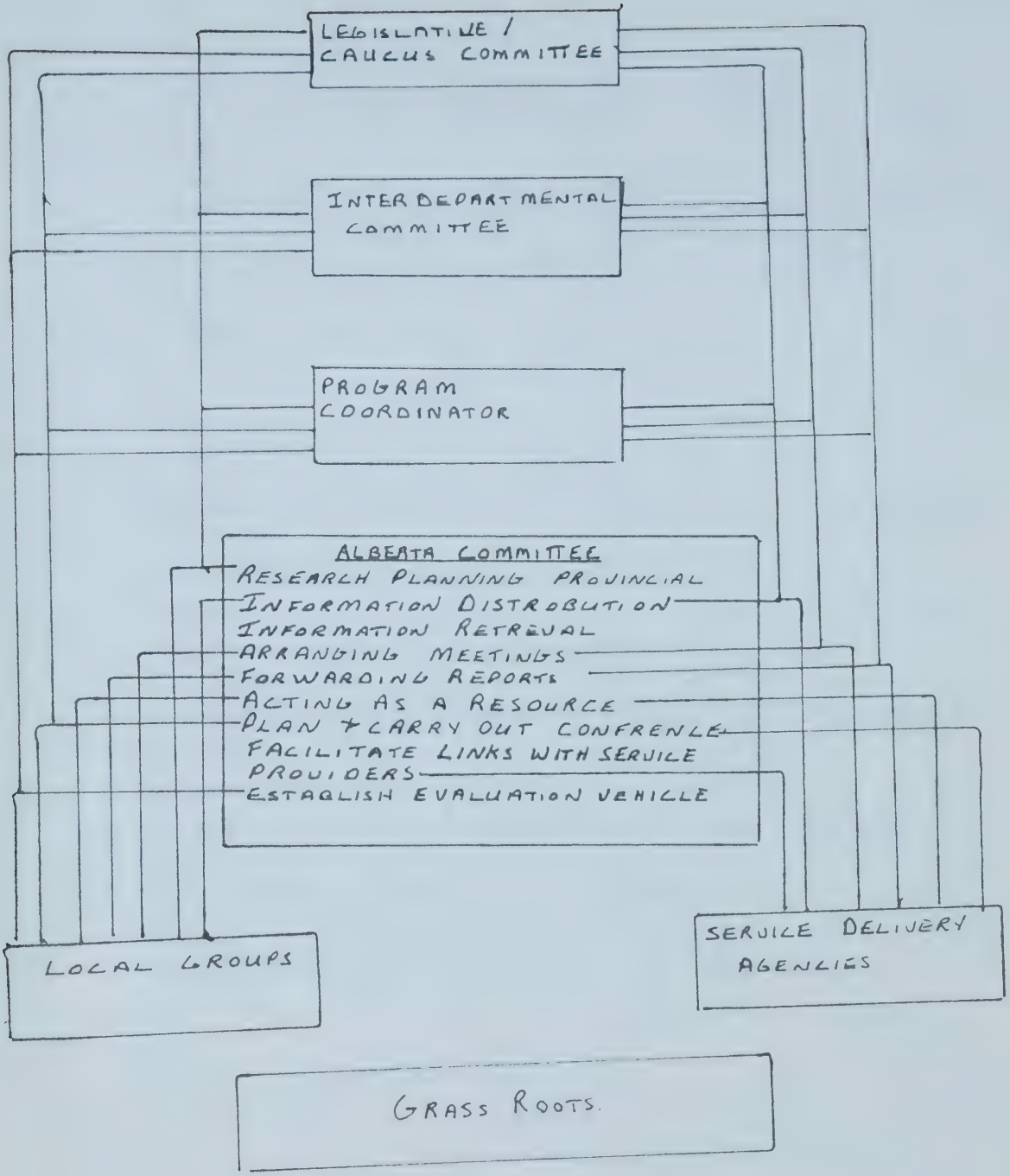
2) It has to rely on maximum involvement of disabled people.

3) Other areas have to develop local groups for local change and for additional input into provincial matters.

4) Research must be done to prepare comprehensive reports for change to government.

5) A communication vehicle will be maintained to assure information is dispersed to all involved.


LEGISLATIVE / CAUCUS COMMITTEE
INTER DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE
PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED
- RESEARCH / PLANNING PROVINCIAL
SERVICE PROVIDED
SERVICES FOR THE HANDICAPPED
ALBERTA COMMITTEE
- RESEARCH / PLANNING LOCAL
7 LOCAL AREAS MEDICINE HAT / CALGARY / LETHBRIDGE / RED DEER / EDMONTON / ST. PAUL / GRANDE PRAIRIE
NOTE: 6 AREAS HAVE MEANS OF BRINGING TOGETHER DISABLED PEOPLE
REGIONAL COORDINATOR SERVICES FOR THE HANDICAPPED
- ASSIST WITH LINKAGES
SERVICE DELIVERY AGENCIES
GRASS ROOTS - IDENTIFY PROBLEM AREAS



ROLE OF THE ALBERTA COMMITTEE

LONG RANGE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1) To develop an effective provincial forum and vehicle for disabled consumer/action groups and linkages with service providing agencies across Alberta.

2) To establish provincial system of communication for monitoring and researching relevant government and community service and legislation.

3) To ensure disabled persons are recognized as responsible citizens able to participate in all aspects of decision making on their own behalf.

4) To ensure on going yearly evaluation.

1980 - 1981

a) strengthen provincial and regional staff.

b) establish effective internal communications via monthly updates and external communication via utilization of handicapped newspaper (Spokesman).

c) establish ongoing funding via government and Ability Fund.

d) strengthen coalition building and local organizational structures.

e) establish official role of representation with provincial government, agencies etc.

f) hold annual conference - theme 1981 - Year of the Disabled Person.

NOTE: Fund for conference will be raised independently.

g) implement 1979 Transportation Conference resolutions.

h) initial planning and implementation for 1981 Year of Disabled Person.

i) initial planning for 1981 - 82 fiscal year.

j) participate in World Congress.

k) establish parameters for comprehensive ongoing evaluation.

1981 - 1982

a) implement 1980 conference resolutions.

b) hold fall conference - theme Where do we go from here?

c) carry out major fundraising campaign (Ability Fund) throughout the province.

d) carry out positive image in provincial publicity programs in conjunction with Ability Fund.

e) establish regular working/advisory group relations with provincial government/service providers.

f) carry out major projects in public education to make Albertans aware of abilities of disabled citizens (Year of Disabled Person.)

g) work on major legislation/policy changes to cover basic needs i.e. transportation, employment, housing, income security.

1982 - 1983

a) implement 1981 conference resolutions.

b) hold fall conference.

c) maintain regular working/advisory group relations with provincial government/service providers.

d) establish and maintain communication with national/international associations.

e) review established frame work and recommend changes.

f) continue fund raising campaign.

BUDGET

We have presented the Alberta Committee's action plan to reduce fragmentation, and increase cooperation among disabled Albertans, service providers, and government. We have touched on some of the elements concerning communication and contact to assure a working system with the province. However, in order to facilitate such an action, funds must be made available.

Our original budget request for the 1980 - 1981 fiscal year of $55,065.00 covered the expenses of the Alberta Committee of Action Groups of the Disabled for three staff based in Edmonton plus travel and meeting costs for the board of directors. If the role of the interdepartmental committee is to encourage community groups of and for the disabled to cooperate and thus assist each other in identifying gaps and duplication in service then it is realistic to decentralize the existing Alberta Committee's resources as demonstrated in the Job Corp Synopsis.

The total funds requested is $187,638 and takes into account the needed increases in staff, transportation and operation costs.

Staff:

The Committee has not increased staff from the original three positions of 1973 until the creation of the federally sponsored project for 1979 - 80 fiscal year. Because these funds will no longer be available the Committee has two alternatives:

1) to terminate the present staff March 31, 1980.
2) to secure funds and provide an effective system for developing the needed input into the provincial government.

Rent:

The budget covers rent for Edmonton and Calgary. The large population base and diverse services available in these centres makes it necessary to maintain on going offices.

The other areas with one staff each are in need of office space and we hope that an agreement can be made with regional Services for the Handicapped to provide some supervision along with office space and support staff.

This has worked successfully in St. Paul and, to a limited extent, in Grande Prairie.

Future Funding:

In order to reduce dependency on government funds the Alberta Committee is initiating negotiations with all parties involved on obtaining the Ability Fund Franchise for the province excluding Edmonton. We hope to run a limited campaign in January 1981 to generate funds for the 1981 - 82 fiscal year. Past experience with fund raising shows that the initial year of such a campaign can generate between $15,000 and $20,000. These funds will assist the local areas in establishing a funding base. It is hoped that within the next five years the majority of our operating expenses will be generated through such campaigns.

1980 World Congress:

A one-time-only grant request for participation of ten delegates in the World Congress of Rehabilitation International to be held in June 1980, in Winnipeg, is included. The Congress will examine long-term international solutions to the problems faced by disabled people and develop a charter for the 80's to be presented to the United Nations.

PROPOSED BUDGET

April 1, 1980 - March 31, 1981

EXPENDITURES

Operating:	
1979 - 80 projected deficit	$ 2,258.00
Salaries including employee benefits - Schedule A	152,680.00
Utilities - Schedule B	4,000.00
Travel - Schedule C	15,000.00
Maintenance - Schedule D	1,000.00
Supplies - Schedule E	2,000.00
Rent - Schedule F	8,500.00
Postage	4,000.00
Printing/Photocoping	5,000.00
Operating Expenses - Schedule G	6,000.00
	$200,438.00
Capital:	
Furniture and Equipment	1,000.00
Total Expenditures	$201,438.00

INCOME

Ability Fund	$ 7,500.00	
Fees, Donations	5,000.00	
Bank Interest	1,300.00	
		$ 13,800.00
Estimated Excess of Expenditures over Income for year		$187,638.00
Total funds requested from Social Services and Community Health		$187,638.00

Schedule A

Research Officer	$ 14,400.00
Information Officer	14,400.00
Library Technician	13,000.00
Communications Officer	12,000.00
Secretary/Bookkeeper	10,800.00
Coordinator (Calgary)	12,600.00
Community Worker (Calgary)	12,000.00
Secretary (Calgary)	9,600.00
Community Worker (Lethbridge)	12,000.00
Community Worker (Red Deer)	12,000.00
Community Worker (Grande Prairie)	12,000.00
Community Worker (St. Paul)	12,000.00
Employee Benefits	5,880.00
	$152,680.00

Schedule B

Heat	$ 500.00
Water	100.00
Electricity	200.00
Telephone	3,200.00
	$4,000.00

Schedule C

Transportation (board @ 6 meetings per year)	$ 6,000.00
Transportation (staff)	4,000.00
Accommodation (board and staff)	5,000.00
	$15,000.00

Schedule D

Janitorial Services:	Edmonton	$ 600.00
	Calgary	400.00
		$1,000.00

Schedule E

Office Supplies	$1,500.00
Miscellaneous	500.00
	$2,000.00

Schedule F

Rent:	Edmonton	$5,000.00
	Calgary	3,500.00
		$8,500.00

Schedule G

Staff Development	
Attendant Care/Interpeter Service	$ 500.00
Library Material	2,000.00
Workshops	2,500.00
Office Insurance	700.00
	300.00
	$6,000.00

WORLD CONGRESS ON REHABILITATION

June 22-27, 1980

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Registration ($250 X 10)	$2,500
Transportation	3,150
Accommodation	2,400
T O T A L	$8,050

DATE DUE
DATE DE RETOUR

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